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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2012
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PRFL](#) [PTER](#) [SHUM](#) [PK](#) [CA](#)
SUBJECT: CANADA OPEN TO SHORT DELAY IN PAKISTANI ELECTIONS,
ASSISTANCE

REF: STATE 170928

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) During a December 31 news conference, Prime Minister Stephen Harper commented regarding Pakistan that "we understand there may be some delay in holding elections. I think that's justifiable as long as it's a delay to ensure a fairer process. As long as it is not a delay leading to suspension." PM Harper emphasized the need for the elections to be held soon, telling reporters "there's obviously some reasons for delays, but the democratic process must go ahead, just the same, in a timely manner."

¶2. (C) In response to reftel demarche, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) South Asia Division Director Jim Nickel said that DFAIT was in the process of considering how Canada would respond to possible scenarios that may develop on January 1, when the Pakistani Election Commission is due to announce whether the January 8 parliamentary elections will face a delay. Nickel said that Canada would appreciate any insights into how the United States would respond to any "significant" delays. Nickel noted that DFAIT understands that President Musharraf may be considering a British offer of assistance for an investigation into Benazir Bhutto's death, adding that Canada is also prepared to offer assistance into an investigation, if needed.

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